



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

February 11, 1997

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To: Mr. Kins,
RL/GBD

Mr. Burkhead, UNADULL

From: Han. 6C-51

The Honorable Ross Sockzehigh
Chairman
Yakama Nation Tribal Council
P.O. Box 151
Toppenish, Washington 98948

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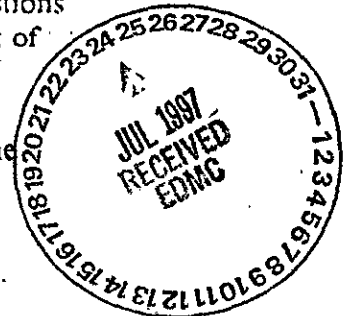
Dear Chairman Sockzehigh:

Thank you for your December 18, 1996, letter regarding the treaty rights of the Yakama Nation within the Hanford Site. Your letter raises concerns over the interpretation of treaty rights in the context of the draft Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement (HRA-EIS), the Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment, and a General Accounting Office report on natural resource damage assessments.

You suggest that these documents were intended to deny or raise serious questions about your treaty reserved rights. We want to assure you that the Department of Energy intends to honor the Yakama Indian Nation's treaty rights. The Department has long held the position that the Hanford Site is not "open and unclaimed" land. We recognize that as we make progress on the cleanup of the site and the land is transitioned to other uses, it is possible that parts of the Hanford site might be considered "open and unclaimed lands" in the future.

The Department recognizes that the Hanford Site contains many cultural and sacred sites as well as foods and medicines which are uniquely important to the affected tribes. We will continue to provide access to tribal members for cultural and religious purposes in accordance with Executive Order 13007 and consult with the Yakama Nation on how best to remediate and restore the environment at Hanford to protect cultural and other important resources.

We are considering tribal comments on the Draft Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement relative to land-use planning. We understand that the future uses of Hanford, whether they be Federal or private, are of the



utmost concern to the affected tribes. As we consider the potential future uses of the Hanford Site, we will work closely with the Yakama Nation and other affected tribes.

With respect to the other two documents referred to in your letter, the Richland Operations Office will discuss them with you. The Yakama Indian Nation's continued participation in the Department's decision-making process is critical. We look forward to working with you to determine the best possible cleanup solutions and the appropriate future uses of the Hanford Site.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Dirk Forrister, Assistant Secretary for Congressional, Public, and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 586-5506.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles B. Curtis". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Charles B. Curtis
Acting Secretary